

Edutainment through comedy; a social experiment

By [Edward Shila](#), issued by [Dentsu](#)

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In mid-2020, I met a man in my neighbourhood named Gilbert Munga, a second-year student studying a bachelor of performing arts at the University of Dar es Salaam. We had a few informal interactions and then one day he asked if there were any opportunities for him at my place of work. I got to know him and found out, he was not only a student but a Comedian, event host and MC. I attended a few of his shows and found myself being absorbed into his world of stand up and performance. It was during this time, that I was introduced to Tanzanian stand-up comedy and a whole community of young creatives who are graduating, not knowing where to go next.





During the field placement and our interactions in the neighbourhood Gilbert confided in me about his life, his friends, his tertiary experience and although he was soon graduating and the host of a popular, monthly stand-up comedy show - it wasn't enough. After some thought about Gilbert, his experiences and his stories, it occurred to me that most graduates in the formal sector form life-long habits during their tertiary years.

In most Tanzanian homes, University is the period where majority of students are introduced to a bit of freedom and are often unsupervised. They are now in control of their own finances and experiment with sex, alcohol consumption and digital consumption. How do you tell a hot-headed, adventure seeking boy to drink responsibly?

As a passionate creative myself and after being introduced to stand-up comedy, the answer to this question is, comedy. Laughter is such a central part of the Tanzanian life; we manage to insert a joke here and there (even during funerals) and through laughter, Tanzanians deal with their pain, sorrow, or happiness. Surely, we could use comedy to educate and influence young people, encouraging positive behavioural changes?

I was keen to test this social experiment and worked on a simple proposal. We proposed a series of comedy theatre productions to be completed in three major universities in three major cities: Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, Mwanza. The content of the production focused on financial literacy, digital literacy, responsible consumption, and safe sex. Our goal and success measure were to have more and more university students graduate with the learnings, life-lessons and practical tools portrayed through the productions to set them up for success

We pitched to one of our clients, Tanzania Breweries Limited. Their corporate affairs department were passionate about the mission and sponsored the event.

Whilst we wanted to educate, we also wanted to engage the students. We tapped into the creative departments of University of Dar es Salaam, University of Dodoma and Saint Augustine University to introduce us to their top students who would work with us on producing the shows.

Sponsored by Tanzania Breweries Limited and supported by University of Dar es Salaam through the creative arts department under Kedmon Mapana, dentsu Tanzania launched our first event in December 2020. The project was led and executed by Gilbert Munga who hosted the events, Tunu Mwinyimbegu a visual artist master's student and Rato James a Film production degree graduate. This core team produced the three shows across the three cities reaching approximately 4200 students.





Below are the key takeaways and observations from the experience:

1. Comedy is the way to go. It's the right time for brands to be using comedians as influencers and content creators.
2. Comedy makes it possible to breakdown complex things and simplify them.
3. Brands have the room to explore with other art forms to communicate. E.g., graffiti, stage plays, etc.
4. There is opportunity to recruit and grow clients in this space
5. There aren't many activities in universities to engage and entertain students.

As the new student year is approaching, we are excited to be working on "Season 2" of the Campus Comedy Tour where we will be expanding our show to more campuses. We look forward to discovering more talent and impacting the lives of young people.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Edward Shila is the MD for dentsu Tanzania.

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